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ABSTRACT

This paper provides a description of programs for Spanish language study in Mexico. The programs listed were chosen because of the interest and beauty of the cities where they are located as well as for the competence of the instruction delivered. A substantial part of the paper is entitled "A Mesoamerican Worldview: The Huichol of Mexico. Lesson Plans to Enrich the Study of Native American Cultures." This part of the paper includes student activities, a discussion of Huichol Indian culture, an introduction to Huichol symbolism, and copies of masks and pictures. (EH)

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Spanish Language and Latin American Culture
Opportunities for Study in Mexico

Distributed by

Barbara Ann Kennedy
Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminar Participant, 1997

Tennyson High School
Hayward Unified School District
Hayward, California
October, 1997

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Language and Culture Study Opportunities in Mexico

Though cities such as San Miguel de Allende and Cuernavaca have long been known as pleasant locales with well-developed programs for Spanish language study, many additional opportunities for language and culture study exist in Mexico. The programs listed below are chosen because of the interest and beauty of the cities where they are located as well as for the competence of the instruction delivered.

Universidad de Guanajuato
Meson de San Antonio
Alonso 12
Guanajuato, Gto.
México
Tel. (473) 2 90 29
Fax (473) 2 40 40

Guanajuato is an intellectual center of Mexico. The small colonial city is filled with students of all ages from all parts of the world. The city grows up steep slopes, and underground tunnels serve as streets. The city's development is limited by its geography, and this is good! There is no pollution, and one has a feeling of calm and safety on the city streets. Open air restaurants surround pleasant plazas. Guanajuato offers a rich cultural life with numerous concerts and theatre productions, museums and festivals. Many of the participants in the Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminar in Mexico (1997) found Guanajuato one of the very most pleasant places we visited. Furthermore, our academic program arranged by the administration at the university was among the most well-organized and well-presented forums of the trip.
This suggests that U. of Guanajuato programs for foreign students would be of high quality. Perhaps most important: Guanajuato is truly beautiful... a place to spend several comfortable, safe, happy weeks.

By the way, U.S. university credit for courses at U. of Guanajuato can be arranged through the University of Arizona.

Universidad de las Américas
(UDLA)
Puebla
Attention: Jaime Wong, International Studies Coordinator
E-mail: informa@udlapvms.pue.udlap.mx

UDLA has a well-developed Spanish language and Latin American culture program designed for adult U.S. students who want a Spanish immersion experience. At UDLA the presentations for the Fulbright-Hays group were especially well-done. The university personnel are very professional; one can trust their ability to deliver a strong academic program, steer students toward important cultural sites and events, and help arrange housing.

Puebla is a fantastic city. Though it is important historically, it is not over-run with tourists. It is home to one of the most magnificent cathedrals in Mexico. As important as the city itself are mountains, small towns and archeological sites very close to Puebla. Just outside town are

Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl, the active volcanoes famous in Mexican folklore and favorite destinations of mountain climbers. Tlaxcala is just north of Puebla; it has a beautiful (relatively small and quiet) plaza and fantastic murals depicting the town's history as the home of supporters of Cortes against the Aztecs. Cholula, an easy taxi trip from Puebla, would be a great place for a quiet week-end. The church of Santa Maria Tonantzintla is a magnificent example of Catholic themes in indigenous imagery. (The walls and dome are covered with flowers, birds, pineapples...a welcome relief from the rather "heavy" imagery typical of Spanish colonial churches.) The Puebla region is another locale to spend several very pleasant weeks.

National Autonomous University of Mexico
Taxco, Mexico

Centro de Enseñanza para Extranjeros Taxco
Apartado postal 70
40200 Taxco, Gro.
Mexico
Tel./Fax (762) 2 01 24

The UNAM in Taxco offers six-week programs in Spanish language and Latin American culture. Each level of Spanish consists of 90 hours (two courses) of class work; each culture class consists of 30 hours (one course) of class work. Students take 6 courses: two in Spanish language and four in L.A. culture. The university can arrange housing and meals.

Taxco is another Mexican town truly worthy of a visit. It is a colonial city on a series of hills. The houses have bright red roofs. The streets are so steep that there is little traffic and no pollution. Taxco is Mexico's main silver center. You won't be able to get out of town without buying something lovely! The Hotel Monte Taxco, accessible by tram, is located high on a mountain on the less busy side of town. You shouldn't miss the sunset over the hills and a wonderful dinner in the hotel's restaurant. The federal government has declared the entire city a national historical monument. Archeological sites are near-by, and Acapulco is two and a half hours away. Taxco is truly a treasure. Who wouldn't enjoy a few peaceful weeks of language study in such a beautiful place?

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A Mesoamerican Worldview: the Huichol of Mexico

Lesson Plans to Enrich the Study of Native American Cultures

Barbara Ann Kennedy

Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminar Participant, 1997

Tennyson High School

Hayward Unified School District

Hayward, California

October, 1997

A Mesoamerican Worldview: the Huichol of Mexico

Student Activities

1. As an introduction to Huichol culture, students view an original yarn painting, original beaded sculptures, various Huichol designs, a feathered wand and a traditional woven wool man's sash. Students are invited to think about the people who created these artifacts. What can one infer about the culture of the people who created them? The teacher records students' ideas on the board. The art and artifacts are displayed in the classroom along with additional materials from indigenous cultures of the Americas.

2. Students locate Huichol territory on the map of North America. Students discuss the importance of the geographical location of Huichol territory; students think about how the geography of Huichol territory might have effected the development of the culture.

3. Students read the short study guide with a partner.

4. In groups of three to five, students discuss the following questions. One student in each group takes notes; a second student prepares to report to the whole class his/her group's responses to the questions.

a) How would you characterize Huichol values? What seems to be important to these people?

b) Do the Huichol have anything to teach members of modern technological societies? What? ....or Why not?

c) How is the Huichol 's ceremonial use of peyote similar to drug use in our society? How is their use of peyote different from drug use in our society?

5. Clearly the Huichol include imagery of their most important symbols in their yarn paintings and beadwork. The class discusses how the Huichol express their values through art.

6. Students consider images representing their own cultural values. Students plan a mask or disk using these images in a symmetrical pattern. Using pencil and paper they sketch their designs. Students plan how they will use strong, vibrant color following Huichol style in the final stage of the creation. When students have carefully planned a Huichol-style mask or disk expressing their values, they complete their final product outside class. (If necessary, students

may borrow classroom supplies during free periods or after school.)

7. Students meet in groups of three to five to share and discuss the imagery in their pieces.

8. As homework students write a description and explanation of the imagery in their pieces. The short essay should include a paragraph discussing color and design and a paragraph discussing the meaning of the imagery included in the piece.

9. Students hand in to the instructor the final product (mask or disk), planning drawings, final short essay on the artwork, evidence of prewriting and planning of the short essay.

10. As part of a commemoration of Columbus Day, student art is exhibited in a public display case along with original Huichol artifacts.

A Mesoamerican Worldview: the Huichol of Mexico

The Huichol Indians of Mexico's Western Sierra Madre today number some fifty thousand and live in northern Jalisco and Nayarit. Best known outside their homeland for their colorful, symbolic yarn paintings and beadwork, the Huichol are of particular interest to those studying Mexico's pre-Columbian past. Anthropologists find them among those people least affected by Western culture. Their home in the rugged Sierra Madres made them inaccessible to the Conquistadores as well as to missionaries arriving in Huichol territory two hundred years after Cortes. In some Huichol districts Catholic missions date back to no later than the 1950s. Because of their self-chosen isolation Huichols have been successful in preserving a vision of life and nature very much like the worldview of the indigenous inhabitants of ancient Mesoamerica. Thus Huichol culture is a particularly clear reflection of pre-Columbian ways of life and systems of values.

The Huichol migrated from the north along either the western or eastern side of the Sierra Madres. They learned agriculture, planted corn and hunted deer. Old Huichol communities were far apart. According to a myth, the gods ordered the Huichol to live far apart so that their women would not argue! More likely, the great distances between Huichol communities is explained by the mountain slopes where the Huichol could grow corn and beans. These arable mountain slopes are widely scattered, so the Huichol were forced to settle in scattered communities. In current times the Huichol have relocated to find work in tobacco fields on the coast or in cities such as Guadalajara. However, each year they return on pilgrimage to their original home and most important natural sanctuary, Wirikuta.

The Huichol are well-known for their ritual use of peyote, a species of cactus known for its hallucinogenic effects. For the Huichol the *jicuri* or peyote is the plant of life. According to

Huichol myth, the deer was the incarnation of God on earth. When man first saw the deer, it ran away and hid, and the *jicuri* sprang up from every hoofprint it left in the sand of the Wirikuta desert. The *jicuri* promotes harmony. It also represents the original ear of corn because peyote and corn share colors of white, yellowish green, red and blue. In Huichol symbolism antlers of the deer represent the first *jicuri*. Thus, corn, deer, and peyote are one and the same in the Huichol mythological system.

The Huichol cannot raise peyote on their land because the soil and climate are unfavorable. For this reason they go on pilgrimage to bring back the cactus central to their religion as well as to gain initiation into the spiritual realities understood by their elders. Along the way pilgrims visit and leave offerings at sacred places. The pilgrimage to Wirikuta becomes a feast of the spirit, and its ceremonies are communions with the Huichols' guardian gods. Novices accompany the *maraca'ame* or shaman, a leader who sings, cures, has prophetic visions and guides the community according to his experience during peyote-induced trances. While on pilgrimage the novice in art or shamanism leaves his offerings and asks the gods to grant him the gift of artistic ability or the priesthood. Then the novice spends several days in the desert hunting and communing with peyote. In this way he receives instruction about how to develop his vocation. When initiates learn how to use the powers available to them, they are only beginning a path filled with hardship and sacrifice including periods of fasting, sexual abstention, further pilgrimage and offering. As initiates approach old age, they become respected elders in the community.

The vocation of the shaman is central to Huichol culture. When shamans become elders their training has given them a vast knowledge of physical and spiritual worlds. The shaman has vast botanical knowledge and is frequently sought out today by researchers in pharmacology. With their powers to heal, change the weather and restore imbalance to equilibrium, Huichol

shamans are the "keepers" of the sacred knowledge of their people and guardians of their traditions. Every detail of sacred ceremony, every sacred object, every prayer and deity is carried in the shaman's memory. The Huichol shaman is a repository of his culture.

Huichol religion is polytheistic and based on an effort to maintain a balance among the forces of nature. Land is sacred space; gods take the forms of plants, animals, rocks, caves, springs, mountains and the various forces of nature. The sun is believed to be the father of human beings; the rain or sky is mother; the wind and the deer are the brothers of humans. Huichols believe that life is a system of contrary forces, like a fight between adversaries: life and death, sickness and health, abundance and misfortune. In the primal struggle three elements of nature changed into gods: corn, peyote and the deer. Through attention, prayer and offerings to this trinity, the lost balance of nature can be restored. Fertility can be restored to the earth, and health can return to humans. For the Huichol the purpose of life is to seek a vision (*nierika*) through which harmony is established with the elements of nature. Because of their reverence for the forces of nature, the Huichol have maintained an attentive relationship to their environment. This awareness of nature is highly respected by members of industrialized cultures struggling to re-establish harmony in their degraded ecosystems.

The religion of the Huichol, known intimately by their elder shamans, is expressed in symbolic art. The Huichol sing their myths, embroider them on clothes and carve them on masks, gourds and their musical instruments. They use beads, yarn and wood as their basic materials. Eagles, deer, peyote, flowers, corn and snakes are depicted in a symbolic, symmetrical style. Their art, based on principles of shamanism, reveals a world in which the struggle for life is influenced by the reverence and offerings of humans.

The Huichols' contemporary art forms are derived from ceremonial offerings they have made for centuries. Huichols offer their gods symbolic arrows, feathered canes, offering bowls

(*jicara*), miniature animals, sacred disks, and sticks and straws covered with woven wool or cotton. Through the symbolic representations of their art, the Huichol reconstruct the relationships between three realms: the human, the natural and the cosmic. Through art the Huichol document their spiritual knowledge. Employing the system of symbols that represent inhabitants of an invisible world, Huichol art becomes a vehicle of ancient healing and wisdom.

Objects created with feathers, wood, animal pictures and symbolic colors are closely identified with a particular god and are a form of prayer. Different colors and representations are associated with different deities. Mesquite wood and the color reddish brown are associated with Tatewari, or Grandfather Fire, who lives on the earth and appears to the Huichol in their peyote visions. His animal messengers are the coral snake and the rattlesnake. The wood of the Brazil tree and mahogany are related to Tayuapa, or Father Sun, who lives in the sky. Tateis is the god of life and the chief ally of the shaman; he represents health and the spirit of the fire that cures. The golden eagle, the guacamaya, and the cardinal belong to him. He is represented by those animal figures or by the flames of a bonfire in front of a ceremonial temple. Kauyumari, the older brother who shaped the world , appears as deer, coyote, pine tree or whirlwind. Takutzi Nakahue is the mother of all gods and of corn. Because she is so old, prayers for longevity are addressed to her. The *salate*, or sacred tree, the armadillo, the water serpent, rain and the bear are her symbols. Of great significance are the colors and forms associated with peyote. These include kaleidoscopic patterns called *neakilas*, often seen in the center of yarn paintings. These *neakilas* are shamanic power objects symbolizing doorways through which the shaman passes into the spiritual realm.

As the Huichol artist depicts his deities, persons from technological societies can glimpse a special, very different knowledge of the interaction of the physical and spiritual worlds. The Huichol are able, through artistic expression, to convey to members of very

diverse cultures realities and values that might well enrich those who have lost their grounding in nature.

An Introduction to Huichol Symbolism

Birds	Messengers from the gods, feathers used ceremonially
Corn	Principal symbol of life, associated with peyote, Earth Mother's symbol
Deer	Spirit guide who leads shamans on visionary path
Blue Deer	Peyote
Eagle	Embodiment of a goddess known as Mother Eagle, healing
Snake	Protector of corn and peyote, intermediary between humans and spirit world, healing
Scorpion	Protection from evil and bad luck
Candles, arrows, bowls, disks, mirrors	Various offerings to gods
Lizards	Healing, close allies of shaman
Red serpent	Earth Mother
Flowers	Used in all ceremonies, considered sacred
Wolves	Huichols are descended from "wolf people" who inhabited the earth in primordial times. Wolves are respected as carriers of spirits; they are honored in all peyote ceremonies.

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Mask with Lizards

Cecilia Carrillo

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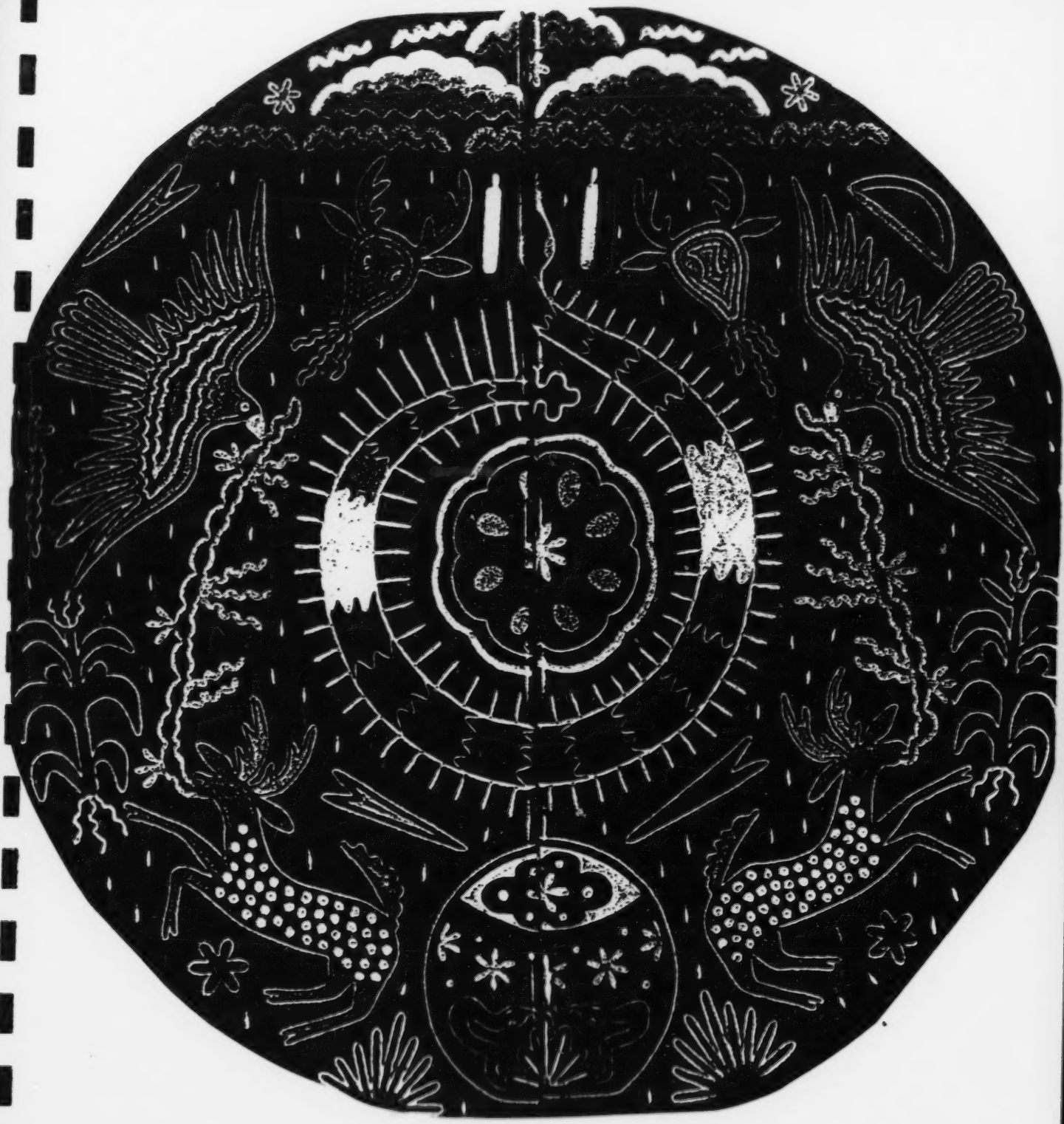
Yarn Painting: "The Shaman"

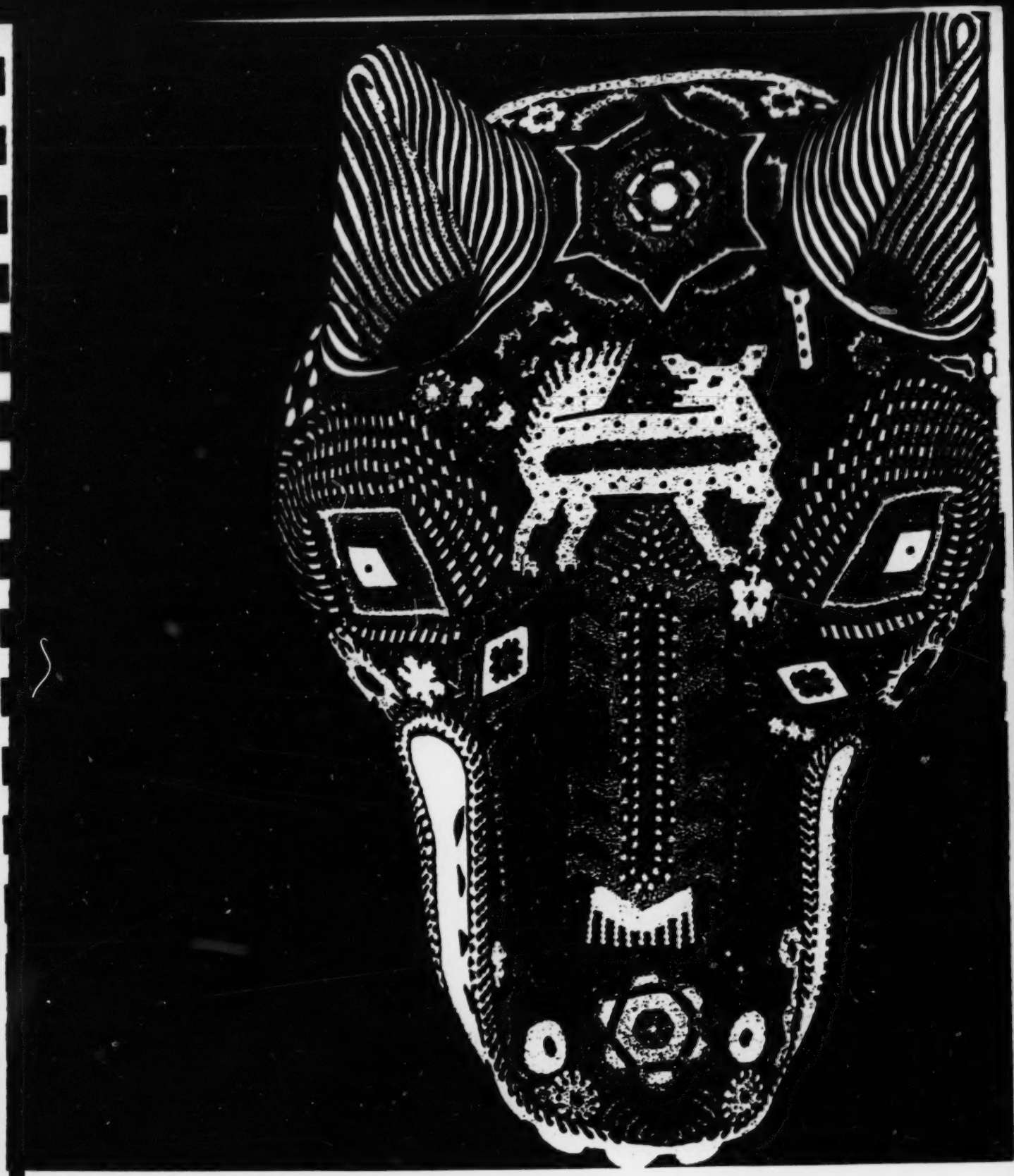
Antonio López Pineda



Sacred Disk: "The Snake Protects the Sacred Peyote"

Embroidery Thread and Wax on Wood

Rogelio de la Cruz Carrillo



Deer Design

Gpe. de la Cruz Carrillo